

***Penstemon barrettiae* Gray**

Barrett's beardtongue

Scrophulariaceae (Figwort family)

**Status:** State Threatened, USFWS Species of Concern

**Rank:** G2S2

**General Description:** *Penstemon barrettiae* is a medium-sized perennial herb, with stems 8-16 inches tall, much branched and somewhat shrubby at the base. The leaves are evergreen, thick, leathery or succulent, bluish-to grayish green, and toothed along the margins. The rose-purple flowers are 1 to 1 ½ inches long, tubular, and strongly two-lipped at the end. The flowers are approximately ½ inch wide at the mouth, and hairy on the inside of the lower lip.

**Identification Tips:** *Penstemon barrettiae* belongs to the group of beardtongue species that have their anthers densely covered with a tangle of woolly hairs. It can be distinguished from other members of the genus occurring within its range by its smooth stems and blue-green, grayish glaucous, almost succulent-looking leaves.

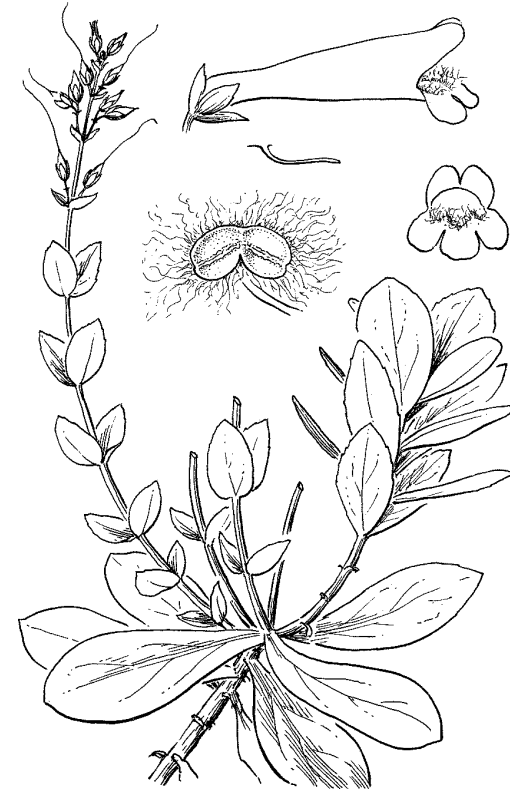
**Phenology:** Plants have been observed in flower between late April and early June. Flowers are long-lasting and abundant per individual plants.

**Range:** Local endemic of the Columbia River Gorge area (primarily along the Klickitat River) in Klickitat County in Washington, and in Hood River, Multnomah and Wasco counties in Oregon. Occurs in the transition zone between the Columbia Basin, Eastern Cascades and Western Cascades physiographic provinces.

**Habitat:** In Washington, *Penstemon barrettiae* generally grows in crevices along basalt cliff faces, on ledges of rock outcrops, on open talus and occasionally along well-drained roadsides. It occurs mostly at lower elevations, but its range is up to 3200 feet. It generally occurs on rocky substrates of basaltic origin, with little soil development. Soils are composed of wind blown material and organic matter and provide good drainage. *Pseudotsuga menziesii* and *Pinus ponderosa* are the dominant trees within its range.

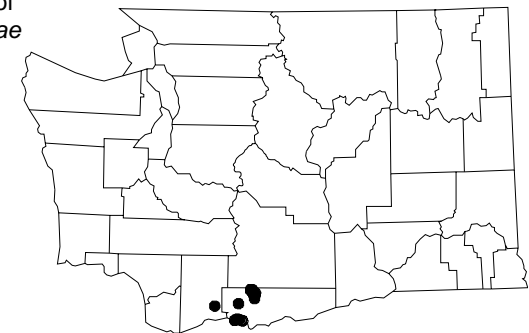
***Penstemon barrettiae***

Barrett's beardtongue



©1959 University of Washington Press. Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish.

Known distribution of  
*Penstemon barrettiae*  
in Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

***Penstemon barrettiae***

Barrett's beardtongue



Photo by Lois Kemp



Photo by Tracy Rush

***Penstemon barrettiae***

Barrett's beardtongue

**Ecology:** It is possible that the establishment of *P. barrettiae* plants on rocky cliff ledges and talus may create a microhabitat suitable for the establishment of other species.

**State Status Comments:** The species' restriction to a small geographic range within the state and to a narrow ecological niche are the primary factors affecting its state status.

**Inventory Needs:** Additional surveys should be conducted to search for additional populations and to assess the extent or range of known populations. In many cases a pair of field binoculars is essential for viewing inaccessible portions of populations. The use of a small boat is also recommended to facilitate observations of portions of several populations along the Klickitat River and to search for additional plants.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** Threats include herbicide use, quarrying, timber harvest, road maintenance activities, and changes in hydrology that may reduce the availability of water. Recreational uses such as hiking and rock climbing may pose localized threats.

**References:**

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 4: Ericaceae through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 597 pp.